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LONDON FOR NEA WATCHER  
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TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [MU](#)  
SUBJECT: OMAN MEDIA REACTION

¶1. SUMMARY: State Arabic daily "Oman" criticized corrupt Omani businessmen for their role in Oman's Tier 3 Trafficking in Persons rating. Private daily "Al Shabiba" warned that a lack of true freedom of expression was causing a backsliding to tribalism. Another "Al Shabiba" editorial accused senior officials of using their offices for personal gain, and called for a return to official probity. END SUMMARY.

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"Failure to Correct Expatriate Labor Issues"  
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¶2. On September 16, government-owned "Oman" (circulation 38,000) published an editorial by its senior columnist, with the the strongest criticism to date of trafficking in persons violations by Omani nationals, saying "They are Worsening the Abuse":

"The failure to correct expatriate labor issues was behind the [Tier 3] listing of Oman in the Trafficking in Persons report. Omani contractors bring in huge numbers of laborers, then illegally transfer responsibilities to expatriate executives. These foreign executives do not provide minimum standards of dignity, let alone comfort, while Omani sponsors live comfortably off the commissions. However, in the end, the Omani sponsor is the one responsible, as his signature is on the documents. Is it not time for these so called Omani businessmen and contractors to respect the laws of their country and support workers' rights? Is it not time for these criminals to stop subjecting our country to international accusations?"

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Freedom of Expression "Almost Nonexistent"  
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¶3. Muhammad al-Balushi wrote in the Arabic daily "Al Shabiba" (circulation 20,000) on September 20 that true freedom of expression is required for Oman to combat tribalism and sectarianism. According to "Defending National Sovereignty is a Part of the Basic Law":

"Most citizens do not understand the basic concepts of freedom established by the Omani Basic Law. In the Basic Law, the definition of liberty is always connected with social or religious concepts such as "Halal" or "Haram". But, civil concepts of freedom of expression and the right to criticize are almost nonexistent. But how could we have freedom of expression and the right to criticize when we are unable to openly discuss issues that affect our society? Can we deny that tribalism, which is the source of ignorance, is coming back into our society and that people are more loyal to it than the country? How can we protect future generations from ideological and social dangers if our educational system will not confront these issues? This lack of understanding is the cause of the negative tribalism and sectarianism hovering around us."

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"Spreading Corruption When They Should be Reforming"  
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14. On September 21, "Al-Shabiba" editorialist Yusuf al-Bulushi, accused "very senior officials" of corruption in an extremely rare journalistic critique of the establishment. "Reformers or Corruptors" said:

"Very senior officials in control of sovereign economic establishments are taking advantage of their official positions for personal benefit, spreading corruption when they should be reforming. They manipulate the media to promote false messages of their achievements and performance in office, instead of concentrating on making improvements. Reformation only takes place in a healthy work environment in which officials do not promote and hire relatives or provide external services".

GRAPPO